



Triboelectric pulsed direct-current enhanced radical generation for efficient degradation of organic pollutants in wastewater

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ABSTRACT

The generation of free radicals was enhanced by triboelectric pulsed direct-current during the organic pollutant degradation. The self-powered electrochemical system was constructed for enhancing 4-CP removal powered by a water-driven triboelectric nanogenerator (WD-TENG). The output of current, voltage, and power of WD-TENG were studied. The removal of 4-CP and its degradation mechanism were also discussed. The results shows that the formation of hydroxyl radicals ($\cdot\text{OH}$) was improved by improving PMA(Mo^{5+}) conversion efficiency by the WD-TENG in the phosphomolybdic acid/ H_2O_2 (PMA/ H_2O_2) system, resulting the mineralizing the 4-CP via dichlorination and oxidation. The removal of 4-CP improved by 10% in 120 min in the WD-TENG powered electro-PMA/ H_2O_2 system. This study provides a promising methodology for improving the performance of self-powered electrochemical processes for the treatment of environmental pollution.

1. Introduction

Pulping wastewater, one of the serious pollution sources, is hard to be treated [1]. Because bleaching process could lignin could be converted partly into absorbable organic halogen (AOX), kinds of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) by chlorine bleaching agents in pulping process [2,3], which can enrich in living organisms and produce lasting contamination. So advanced treatment technologies of pulping wastewater with high efficiency and low-carbon economy become a new topic and the inevitable way for green and sustainable development of pulping industry [4].

4-chlorophenol (4-CP), a kind of POPs, is used as the target compound in bleaching process [5]. 4-CP is highly toxic, colorless, and soluble in water. Its high solubility makes it one of the most highly dispersed toxic environmental pollutants. Thus, this pollutant must be maintained at very low concentrations in natural waters. Numerous technologies have been tested for chlorophenol removal, including electrochemical degradation [6,7], Fenton oxidation [8], sonochemical method [9], adsorption [10], photodegradation [11], catalytic hydrodechlorination [12], and biological processes [13]. However, several of these technologies has disadvantages, such as photo-oxidation requires expensive reagents; bioremediation requires applications at a high

concentration; and physisorption might cause secondary pollution [12]. Among these, Fenton oxidation is a potentially advanced technology for wastewater treatment because it can generate hydroxyl radicals ($\cdot\text{OH}$) [14].

The hydroxyl radical, a powerful oxidizing agent with a potential of 2.87 V vs standard hydrogen electrode (SHE), can mineralize pollutants into CO_2 and H_2O [15]. It can be produced by activating hydrogen peroxide using Fe, Cr, Cu, Mn, or phosphomolybdic acid [16–18]. However, $\cdot\text{OH}$ is unstable, can be quenched or caught by H_2O_2 , and then chemically decomposes to oxygen [19,20]. Thus, these $\cdot\text{OH}$ radicals cannot be used effectively. Electrolysis can enhance electron transformation, which is considered to be the limit of the catalytic ability in this process [19,21]. It can also convert dissolved oxygen into hydrogen peroxide via two-electron oxygen reduction [22]. The predominant technology used is the electro-Fenton process. In the electro-Fenton process, the efficiency depends on the supporting electrolyte type, electrode material, concentration of pollutants, and electric current density [23]. However, its use is limited owing to the large amount of power consumption derived from fossil fuel combustion, low catalytic activity of the cathode catalyst for the formation of H_2O_2 , and production of secondary pollutants in iron sludge [24,25]. Thus, electrolysis using non-fossil energy and high activity catalysts without iron is

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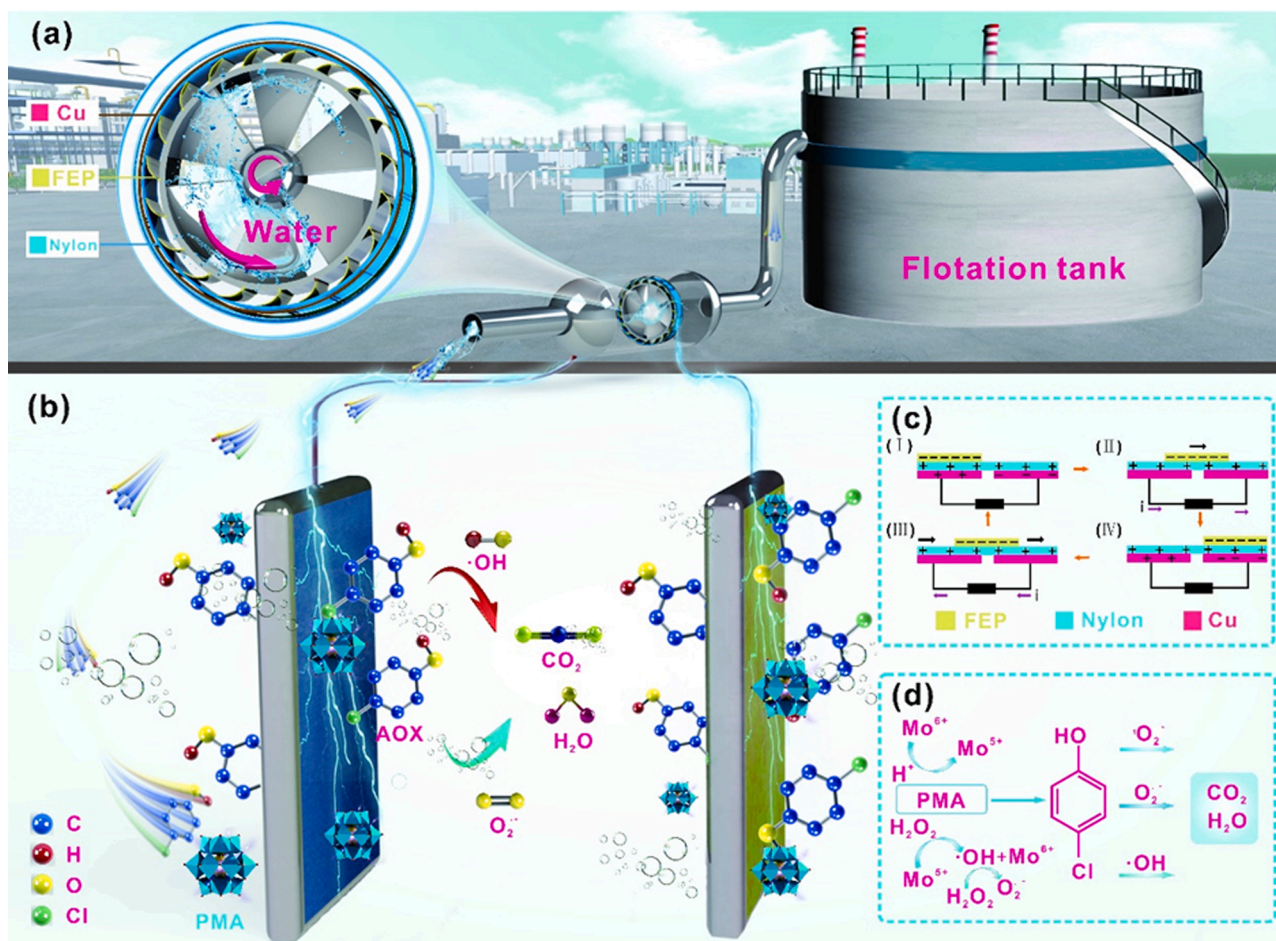


Fig. 1. Self-powered 4-CP degradation system. (a) The mechanical energy of liquid flow is collected and converted into electrical energy by WD-TENG in the pipeline. (b) Schematic diagram of WD-TENG improved 4-CP removal. (c) WD-TENG power generation principle. (d) The scheme of 4-CP degradation.

difficult [26].

Triboelectric nanogenerators (TENGs), an emerging technology for converting mechanical movement into electrical power, have been adopted for self-powered systems in recent years owing to their low cost, flexible design, and excellent adaptability [27–31]. Electrical power, transferred from mechanical movement of TENGs, cooperates with electrochemical techniques to constitute a self-powered electrocatalytic system, which has been applied in wastewater treatment, microbial disinfection, and air pollutant treatment [32–35]. Ye Chen demonstrated self-powered electro-Fenton degradation system, powered by TENGs, for the first time [36]. Since then, many studies have reported that TENGs have great potential as part of self-powered electrochemical systems for environmental treatment by collecting energy from various frequencies of irregular mechanical energy [37–43]. A stable high voltage and the generation of a powerful electric field is the output of a self-powered electrochemical system [44,45]. The powerful electric field cleaves the chemical bonds to remove organic pollutants, such as basic orange 2, methylene blue, and 4-dimethylaminoazobenzene [26, 29,46].

Polyoxometalates are a typical inorganic cluster with various structures, solubilities, and redox potentials and high acidity. This facilitates strong electrochemical processes with multistep redox reactions and multiple electron transfers. POMs' thermal and oxidative stability is their most attractive property, making them suitable as a catalyst for organic synthesis and environmental remediation [47]. Among the various POMs, Keggin-type heteropoly acids (e.g., $\text{H}_3\text{PMo}_{12}\text{O}_{40}$ and $\text{H}_3\text{PW}_{12}\text{O}_{40}$) can catalyze H_2O_2 to generate $\cdot\text{OH}$ [18,48].

In this study, a water-driven triboelectric nanogenerator (WD-TENG)

with DC output was used to build a self-powered electrochemical system to enhance the 4-CP removal efficiency. The appropriate structure of the WD-TENG and its output performance were investigated. The efficiency of the electrochemical 4-CP treatment process was systematically studied using a powered phosphomolybdic acid/ H_2O_2 (PMA/ H_2O_2) system. The output of the WD-TENG could reach a voltage of 22 V with a current of 10 μA . The removal of 4-CP improved by 10% in 120 min in the WD-TENG powered electro-PMA/ H_2O_2 system. Cooperating with the WD-TENG, $\cdot\text{OH}$ played an important role in 4-CP removal, and the spin number was improved from 4.2×10^{15} to 5.0×10^{15} . 4-CP was removed via dichlorination and mineralization by the free radicals. This study provides a promising methodology for improving the performance of self-powered electrochemical processes for the treatment of environmental pollution.

2. Experimental section

2.1. Materials

4-CP ($\geq 99\%$) was purchased from Sigma-Aldrich. H_2O_2 (30%), while 2,2,6,6-tetramethyl 1-4-piperidinol (TMP), 5,5-dimethyl-1-pyrroline N-oxide (DMPO), ethanol, chromatographic grade acetonitrile, and phosphomolybdic acid (PMA; $\text{H}_3\text{PMo}_{12}\text{O}_{40}$) were purchased from Aladdin Chemistry Co., Ltd. (Shanghai, China). $\text{Na}_2\text{HPO}_4 \cdot 12 \text{H}_2\text{O}$ and $\text{NaH}_2\text{PO}_4 \cdot 2 \text{H}_2\text{O}$ were obtained from Tianjin Zhiyuan Reagent Co. Ltd. (Tianjin, China). All the chemicals were used without further purification.

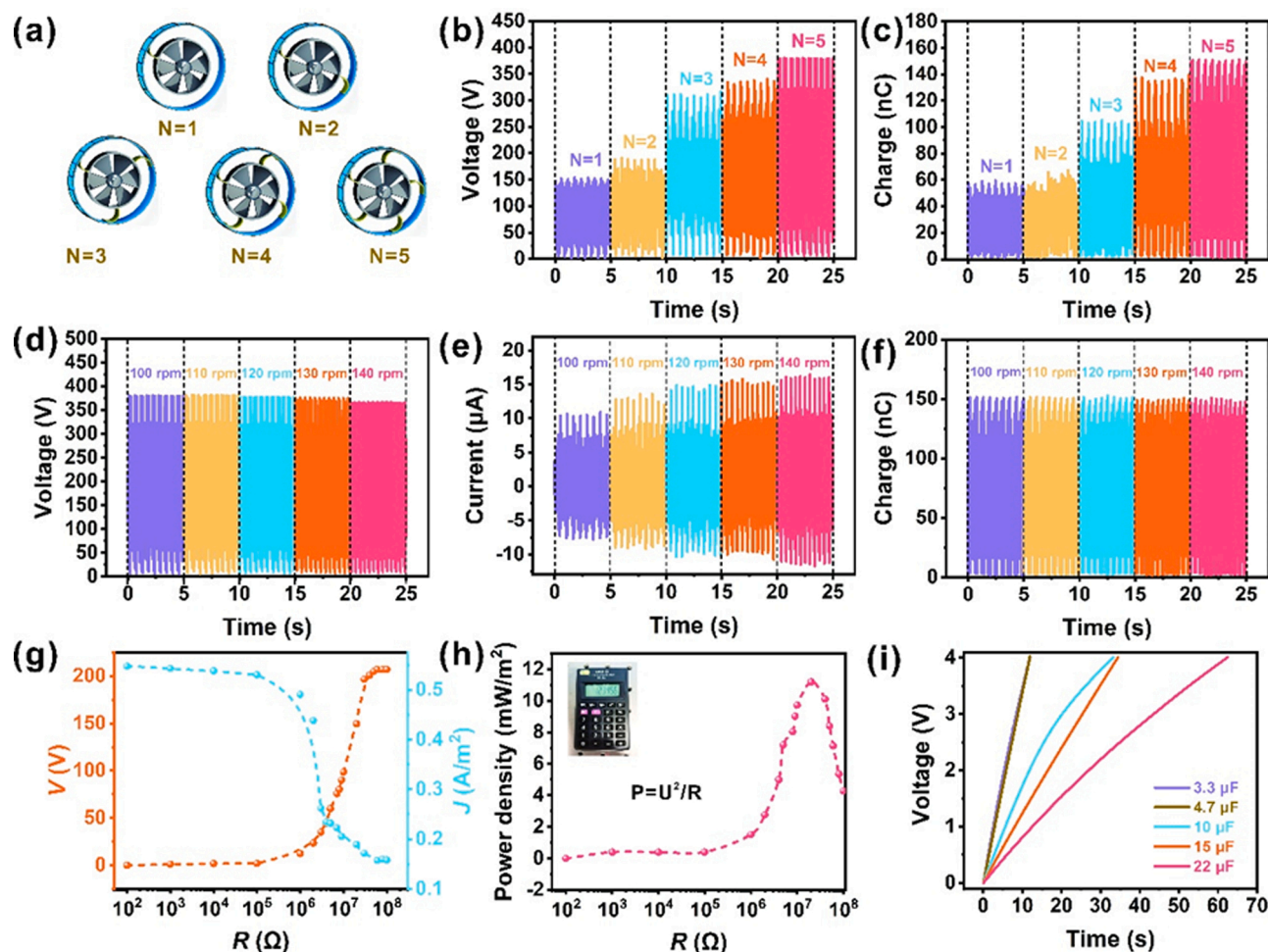


Fig. 2. The performance of WD-TENG. (a) Schematic diagram of WD-TENG with different numbers of FEP films installed. (b) Voltage of WD-TENG with different numbers of FEP films installed. (c) Charge of WD-TENG with different numbers of FEP films installed. (d) Voltage of WD-TENG at different speeds. (e) Current of WD-TENG at different speeds. (f) Charge of WD-TENG at different speeds. (g) The dependence of the output current, voltage on different resistive loads (h) Power density curve. (i) The charging voltage of capacitors with different capacities.

2.2. Fabrication and testing of the WD-TENG

Freestanding triboelectric layer units of the WD-TENG were constructed using a perfluoroethylene propylene (FEP) film, nylon, and Cu foil. The FEP was cut into lengths of 5, 7, and 9 cm with a width of 7 cm and was fixed in the WD-TENG. Nylon was used as the fixed layer and FEP was used as the slide layer of the WD-TENG. Waterproof glue was used to separate the freestanding triboelectric layer units from the water. Different numbers of freestanding triboelectric layer units were installed according to the actual needs. The output performance was measured using an electrometer (Keithley 6514, USA) [49].

2.3. Self-powered electrochemical degradation of 4-CP

The experiments of 4-CP removal were conducted in an oil bath pot, with 0.78 mM 4-CP, 3.9 mM PMA, and 19.5 mM H_2O_2 at 90 °C for 120 min. A buffer consisting of $\text{Na}_2\text{HPO}_4 \cdot 12 \text{H}_2\text{O} / \text{NaH}_2\text{PO}_4 \cdot 2 \text{H}_2\text{O}$ (1:3, v/v) was used. Subsequently, 100 mL of the solution was placed in the electrolytic device. The degradation of 4-CP was performed at a rectified current of 10 μA DC supplied by the WD-TENG. Pt was used as the positive electrode, and a glassy carbon electrode was used as the negative electrode.

2.4. Analysis of intermediate products

High-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC, Agilent1100, Agilent Technologies Co Ltd, USA) was used to analyze the concentration of 4-CP. The samples of the residual organic matter were filtered using a 0.22 μm nylon membrane. An Agilent ZORBA XSBC-18 was used as the HPLC column. The mobile phase was a mixture of ultrapure water and acetonitrile at a ratio of 70:30 (v/v) with a flow rate of 1.0 mL/min. Other conditions were as follows: column temperature, 30 °C; injection volume, 10 μL ; and analytical wavelength, 280 nm. The intermediate products (4-CC, HQ, and BQ) were also analyzed by gradient elution HPLC with a mobile phase comprising a mixture of ultrapure water and acetonitrile at analytical wavelengths of 289.7, 245.9, and 281.4 nm. The ratio of ultrapure water to acetonitrile was maintained at 80:20 (v/v) for 15 min, and then increased linearly to 10:90 within 15 min.

2.5. Determination of free radicals

The free radicals were analyzed using an electron paramagnetic resonance spectrometer (EPR, EMXmicro-6/1/P/L, Karlsruhe, Germany). 5,5-dimethyl-1-pyrroline N-oxide (DMPO) was used as a trapping agent for $\bullet\text{OH}$ and superoxide radicals ($\bullet\text{O}_2$), whereas 2,2,6,6-tetramethyl 1-4-piperidinol (TMP) was used for trapping singlet oxygen ($^1\text{O}_2$) [50]. Ethanol was used as the scavenger of $\bullet\text{OH}$.

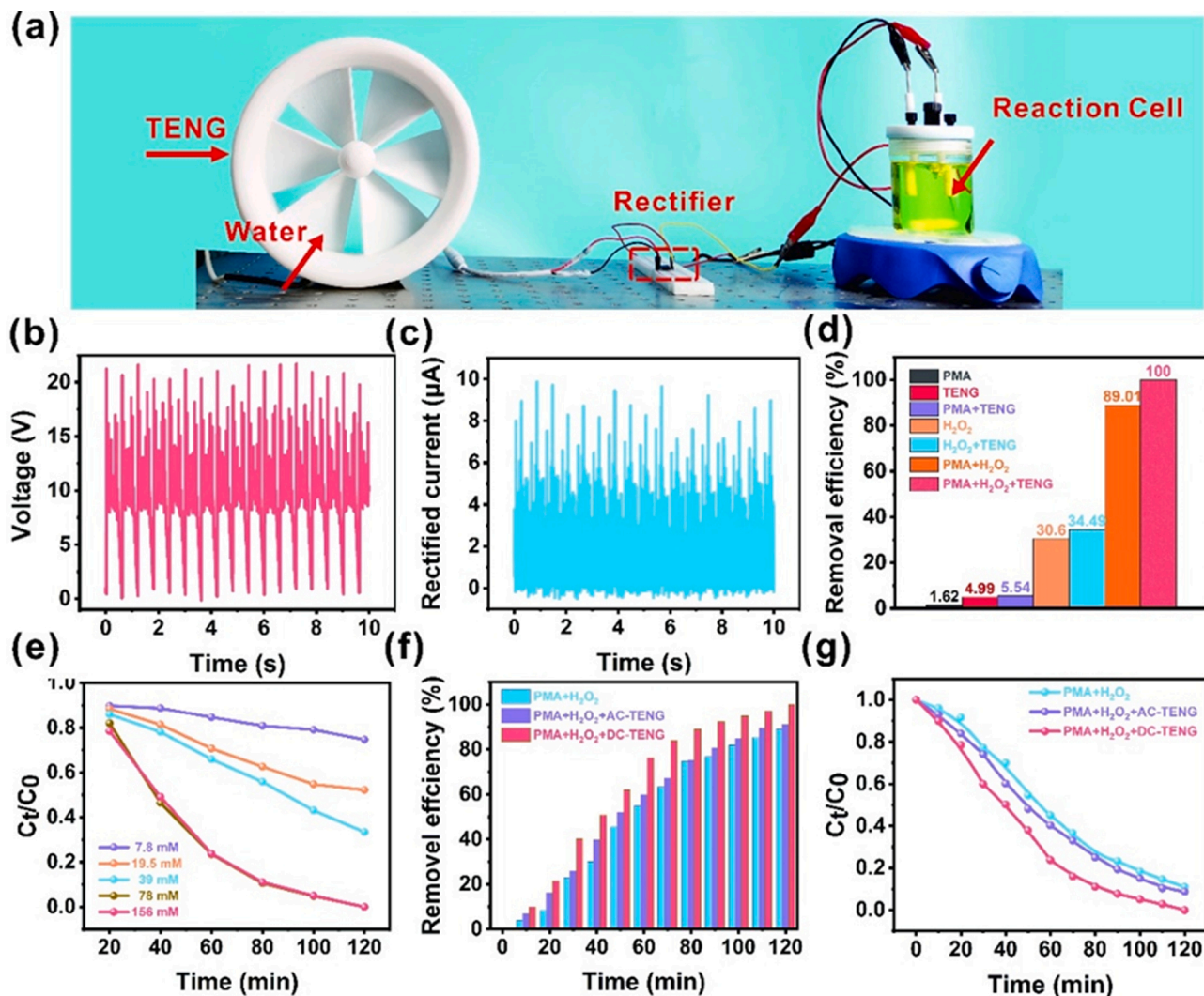


Fig. 3. Self-powered to improve AOX removal efficiency via WD-TENG. (a) Picture of self-powered AOX degradation system. (b) Rectified voltage. (c) Rectified current. (d) The removal efficiency of 4-CP under different reagent. (e) The removal efficiency of 4-CP under different H_2O_2 dosages. (f) The effect before and after rectification on the removal efficiency of 4-CP. (g) The removal performance of 4-CP before and after rectification.

2.6. Analyzation of Mo species in $\text{H}_3\text{PMo}_{12}\text{O}_{40}$

The Mo species were studied using X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) on an ESCALAB 250XI_p spectrometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, USA) with a K Alpha X-ray source. The testing voltage, current, and photoelectron emission angle were 12 kV, 16–25 mA, and 90° , respectively.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Removing 4-CP by a self-powered electro-PMA/ H_2O_2 system

In this study, a water-driven triboelectric nanogenerator (WD-TENG) was designed to collect energy from wastewater flowing in the pipeline, as shown in Fig. 1a. The potential energy generated from the liquid level difference usually gets wasted, because it is too low to drive generators. The WD-TENG was used as a generator in the effluent output pipeline of a flotation tank to capture the mechanical energy of the liquid flow. Electrical energy was supplied to the PMA/ H_2O_2 system to remove the 4-CP wastewater (Fig. 1b). Because PMA has excellent redox characteristics, electrical versatility, and high proton conductivity [51], it can catalyze H_2O_2 to mineralize 4-CP using the free radicals [18].

The freestanding triboelectric layer units of the WD-TENG were

constructed using a perfluoroethylene propylene (FEP) film, nylon, and Cu foil. The WD-TENG could harvest and convert the potential energy of wastewater into electrical energy. With the wastewater flowing through the turbine, the turbine is turned, which causes relative sliding between the FEP and nylon. Because the electron binding capacities of the materials are different, electrons move from the surface of the nylon to the FEP, leading to an increase in the electric potential on the surface of the Cu foil. This difference in potential causes charge accumulation and current formation, as shown in Fig. 1c. Fig. 1d illustrates the 4-CP degradation scheme. PMA, as an electron medium and proton carrier, can capture electrons and catalyze H_2O_2 to produce more free radicals, such as singlet oxygen, superoxide radicals, and $\cdot\text{OH}$, which can mineralize 4-CP into CO_2 and H_2O .

3.2. Output performance of the WD-TENG

The output performance of the WD-TENG was investigated using different structure angles, lengths of FEP, and numbers of freestanding triboelectric layer units, as shown in Fig. 2. FEP, which contained the $-\text{CF}_3$ group, exhibited the highest charge density [52]. Nylon falls at the positive end of the “triboelectric series,” which means it is a best electron donor [53]. Therefore, the contact charge would transfer from nylon, the most positively charged material, to FEP, a negatively

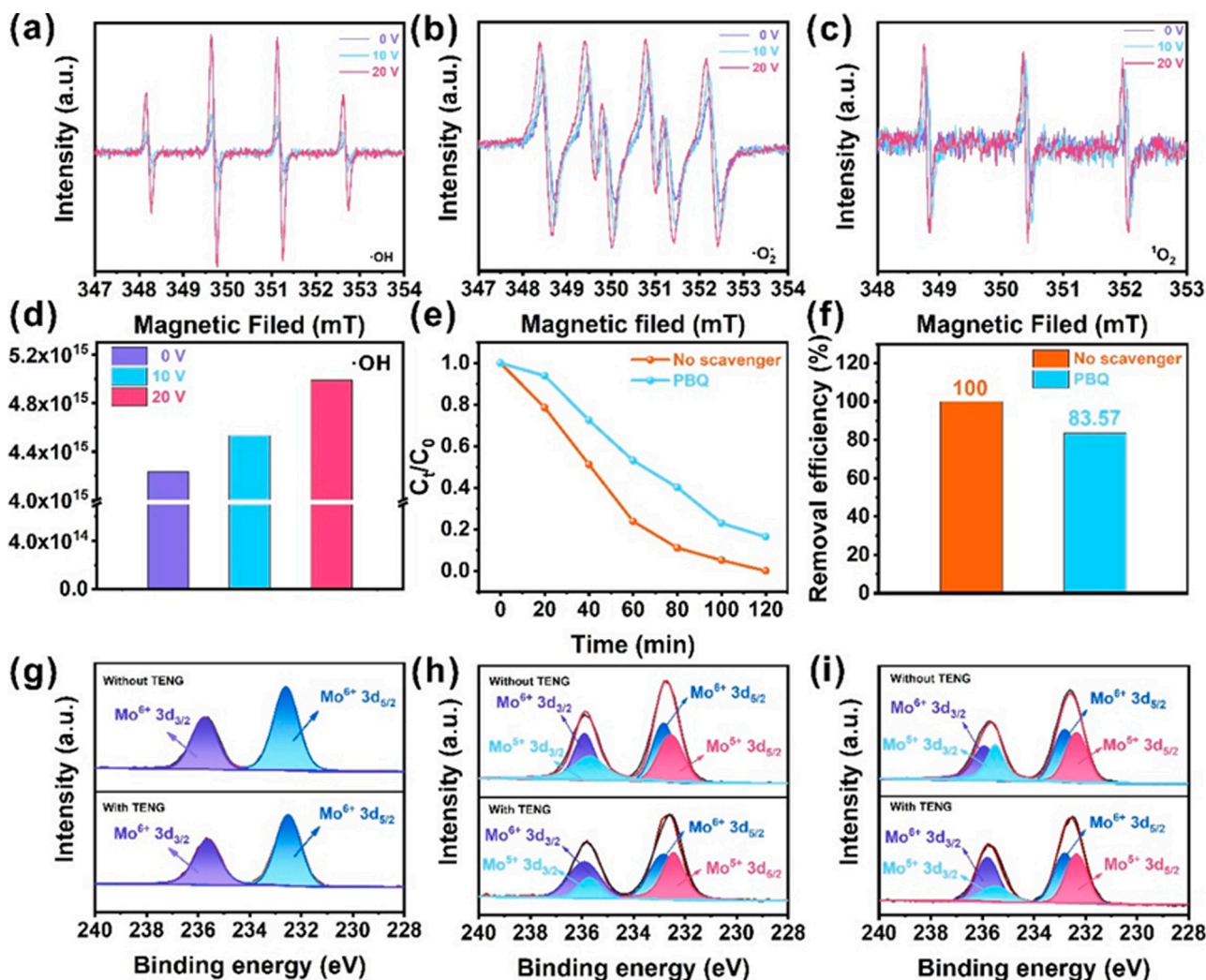


Fig. 4. Self-powered degradation mechanism of AOX. (a) ESR spectra of $\cdot\text{OH}$ captured at voltages of 0 V, 10 V, and 20 V. (b) ESR spectra of $\cdot\text{O}_2$ captured at voltages of 0 V, 10 V, and 20 V. (c) ESR spectra of $^1\text{O}_2$ captured at voltages of 0 V, 10 V, and 20 V. (d) Quantitative test of $\cdot\text{OH}$ captured at voltages of 0 V, 10 V, and 20 V. (e) $\cdot\text{OH}$ capture. (f) Comparison of removal efficiency of $\cdot\text{OH}$ capture. (g) Mo species of PMA with and without WD-TENG before the reaction. (h) Mo species of PMA with and without WD-TENG at 30 min. (i) Mo species of PMA with and without WD-TENG at 90 min.

charged polymer, during the relative sliding between FEP and nylon. This results in a charge transfer and mechanical energy harvesting from the turbine rotation. The effect of the output performance on the number of freestanding triboelectric layer units is presented in Fig. 2a. The results demonstrate that with increased number of units, both the voltage and electric charge increase. When using five freestanding triboelectric layer units, the voltage and electric charge can reach 380 V and 150 nC, respectively. When the number of units is more than five, the friction of the turbine increases, making it difficult to rotate. Fig. S1 shows the output performance of the WD-TENG with different structural angles (α) between the FEP and turbine. The voltage and current output of the WD-TENG increased with an increase in the angle between the FEP and the turbine, reaching 140 V and 50 nC per unit when $\alpha = 90^\circ$ (Figure. S1). A change in α resulted in a change in the friction force, which affected the output of the WD-TENG. As demonstrated in Fig. S2, when the length of the FEP was increased, the voltage and current outputs of the WD-TENG also increased slightly. Thus, five freestanding triboelectric layer units were used with $\alpha = 90^\circ$ and FEP = 9 cm in the following experiments. Fig. 2d–f exhibits the electrical outputs of the WD-TENG at different rotation speeds. The data show that the open-circuit voltage and short-circuit current values are stable and can be maintained at approximately 380 V and 150 nC, respectively. The short-circuit current increases with the rotation speed, reaching 15 μA at

140 rpm, while the output performance of the WD-TENG has a slight influence on the rotation speed. This could be due to the accumulation of static charge resulting from improved rotation speed, which speeds up the electron flow in the external circuitry, although the contact state does not change between the friction materials. The dependence of the output current and voltage on different resistive loads and power density is presented in Fig. 2 g and 2 f. The output voltage increased with an increase in the resistance, but the change in current showed the opposite trend. Because internal resistance exists in the WD-TENG, a maximum peak power of 11.5 mW/m^2 could be obtained under an external resistance of 100 M Ω . Charging capacitors with different capacities were tested to collect electricity using the WD-TENG, as shown in Fig. 2 h. A capacitor of 4.7 μF could be charged to 4 V within 30 s, confirming that the capacitor can effectively store an electric charge. These results suggest that the WD-TENG can be used as an independent power source for electrochemistry.

3.3. Removal of 4-CP using a self-powered electrochemical process

PMA can catalyze H_2O_2 to generate free radicals by obtaining electrons from 4-CP, resulting in the reduction of $\text{PMA}(\text{Mo}^{6+})$ to $\text{PMA}(\text{Mo}^{5+})$. H_2O_2 also can oxidize $\text{PMA}(\text{Mo}^{5+})$ back to $\text{PMA}(\text{Mo}^{6+})$ by releasing free radicals, such as singlet oxygen, superoxide radicals,

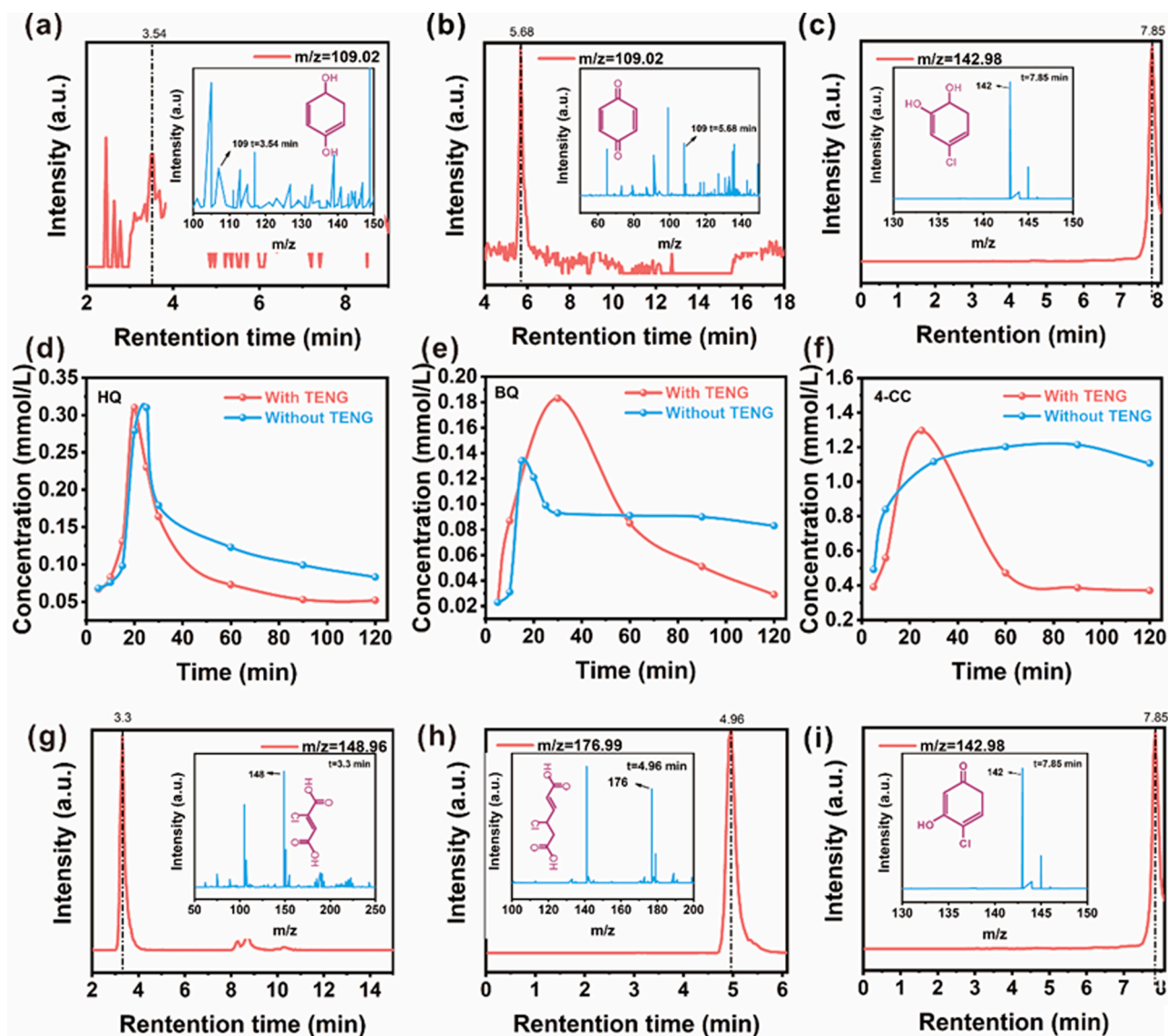


Fig. 5. Intermediate products in self-powered 4-CP removal process. (a) HQ, (b) BQ and (c) 4-CC. (d) Concentration of HQ generated during degradation. (e) Concentration of BQ generated during degradation. (f) Concentration of 4-CC generated during degradation. (g) 2-chlorofumaric acid. (h) (E)-4-chlorohex-2-enedioic acid. (i) 4-chloro-3-hydroxycyclohexa-2,4-dienone.

and-OH [18]. However, the *p* orbitals of the O atoms mainly contribute to the formation of the highest occupied molecular orbital (HOMO), which means that the electrons of oxygen atoms are easily shared with other atoms. The *d* orbitals of metallic Mo and *p* orbitals of the P atoms predominantly contribute to the formation of the LUMO orbital [54]. Furthermore, Mo and P are intermolecular PMA molecules, which make PMA a good proton conductor but a somewhat poor electron conductor [51]. The poor electron conductivity limits the conversion efficiency of PMA(Mo⁶⁺), resulting in poor catalytic properties. The WD-TENG-enhanced PMA/H₂O₂ system was constructed for 4-CP removal, as shown in Fig. 3a. Electrons could be captured by PMA (Mo⁶⁺), and H₂O₂ could obtain electrons to generate ·OH in an electric field [55]. A stable voltage and current were output by the WD-TENG. As demonstrated in Figs. 3b and 3c, the rectified voltage and current were approximately 22 V and 10 μA, respectively. Although a high-voltage output could be implied, the removal rate of 4-CP only increased from 30.6% (without WD-TENG) to 34.49%. This could be due to the poor current output, which could not provide sufficient electrons to H₂O₂ to oxidize 4-CP. PMA significantly improved the removal rate of 4-CP by H₂O₂, which reached 89.01% after 120 min. With the effect of the

electric field and electrons supplied by the WD-TENG, PMA and H₂O₂ were both activated, leading to the removal of 4-CP reaching 100% (Fig. 3d). H₂O₂ also played a key role in the removal of 4-CP. When the concentration of H₂O₂ was less than 39 mmol/L, there were insufficient free radicals to attack the 4-CP, leading to a 4-CP removal rate of approximately 40% after 120 min (Fig. 3e); while, when the concentration of H₂O₂ was high enough to supply sufficient hydroxyl groups to the system, 4-CP could be transformed to unstable intermediates and then mineralized further, as shown in Figs. 3f and 3g. However, while the alternating current (AC) was rectified to direct current (DC), the energy would be saved by avoiding the eddy current loss of AC. The 4-CP removal efficiency was improved, and the lower concentration of 4-CP can be obtained (Figs. 3f and 3g).

3.4. Degradation mechanism of 4-CP

The standard reduction potential (*E*^o) of H₂O₂ is 1.76 V/SHE [56]. However, H₂O₂ initiates the formation of the radicals at the given potential, such as ·OH with higher oxidation power (*E*^o = 2.80 V/SHE), hydroperoxyl radicals (HO₂·) (*E*^o = 1.65 V/SHE), superoxide anion

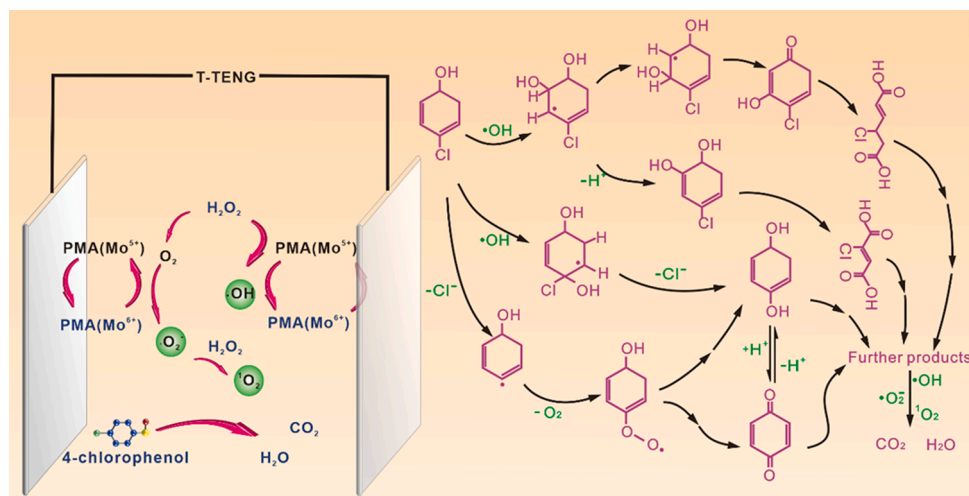
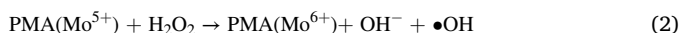


Fig. 6. the possible scheme of 4-CP degradation in self-powered 4-CP removal process.

radicals ($\cdot\text{O}_2^-$), and singlet oxygen ($^1\text{O}_2$) [57,58]. These free radicals were detected at 0 V, 10 V, and 20 V using the electron spin resonance. Fig. 4a depicts the 4-fold peaks with an intensity ratio of 1:2:2:1, indicating the generation of $\cdot\text{OH}$ [59]. The signals of $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$ and $^1\text{O}_2$ were enhanced by increasing the voltage, as shown in Figs. 4b and 4c. Owing to the electric field from the WD-TENG, the spin number of $\cdot\text{OH}$ increased by 25%, from 4.2×10^{15} to 5.0×10^{15} (Fig. 4d). The spin number of $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$ is approximate to 1.5×10^{15} at 20 V (Fig. S4). However, the spin number of $^1\text{O}_2$ increased from 6×10^{12} to 8.6×10^{13} . This would be due to the generating of $^1\text{O}_2$ converted from $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$ and $\cdot\text{OH}$ -mediated pathways through the Haber-Weiss reaction [57].

To confirm the effect of $\cdot\text{OH}$, PBQ was used to capture $\cdot\text{OH}$, as demonstrated in Figs. 4e and 4f. The removal rate decreased 17.43%. Though without the effect of $\cdot\text{OH}$, the removal rate of 4-CP still can reach to 83.57%, indicating that $\cdot\text{O}_2^-$ and $^1\text{O}_2$ also affected the 4-CP removal. In PMA/ H_2O_2 system, PMA (Mo^{6+}) obtains electrons to form PMA (Mo^{5+}) by obtaining electrons from H_2O_2 or 4-CP (Eq. 1) [18]. PMA (Mo^{5+}) performed good catalytic activities to efficiently active H_2O_2 with releasing $\cdot\text{OH}$ (Eq. 2) [60].



The XPS spectra of PMA reacting with H_2O_2 indicates that the conversion efficiency of PMA(Mo^{5+}) was sped up owing to the effect of T-TENG (Fig. 4g-i and Fig. S3). The high conversion efficiency between PMA(Mo^{5+}) and PMA(Mo^{6+}) could generate more $\cdot\text{OH}$ from H_2O_2 .

The series of oxidation intermediate products of 4-CP were analyzed (Fig. 5). 4-chlorocatechol (4-CC), hydroquinone (HQ), and benzoquinone (BQ) were found in the WD-TENG-powered electro-PMA/ H_2O_2 system, because these are the primary oxidation products of 4-CP [61]. With the effect of the electric field and electrons supplied by the WD-TENG, PMA and H_2O_2 were both activated, and the generation of $\cdot\text{OH}$ s was promoted. The increased $\cdot\text{OH}$ s attacks HQ and converts it to HHQ or BQ. Fig. 5d demonstrates that the concentration decreased sharply after 20 min, indicating that HQ could be attacked by free radicals, even though it is more stable than 4-CP. With the effect of the WD-TENG, the concentration of BQ was higher, reaching 1.8 mmol/L at 40 min, compared to that without the WD-TENG, which implies that some BQ was converted from the HQ. 4-CC, the second main intermediate product, seemed to degrade more easily under the effect of the WD-TENG, as shown in Fig. 5f. These intermediate products were further oxidized. Additional intermediate molecules were identified, such as 2-chlorofumaric acid, (E)-4-chlorohex-2-enedioic acid, and 4-chloro-3-hydroxycyclohexa-2,4-dienone.

Based on the above results, the possible pathways of 4-CP are illustrated in Fig. 6. 4-CP is converted to 4-CC, HQ, or BQ via dichlorination or oxidation. $\cdot\text{OH}$ is added at the ortho position of the hydroxyl group of 4-CP. The aromatic ring is then recovered by the elimination of a hydrogen atom, which forms 4-CC. When $\cdot\text{OH}$ attacks the para position or chlorine atom of 4-CP, or an electron occupies the para position of the generated intermediate, it leads to the release of a chloride ion. HQ can either be oxidized to BQ [62] or can be converted to hydroxyhydroquinone (HHQ) owing to the $\cdot\text{OH}$ attack, but HHQ is unstable and is further oxidized to hydroxybenzoquinone (HBQ) or other products. 4-CC can be degraded into small molecular fragments by a ring-opening reaction. These intermediate products may be further mineralized into CO_2 and H_2O by the free radicals.

4. Conclusions

In summary, this work demonstrates a self-powered wastewater treatment system that is efficient in enhancing and powering WD-TENG. The WD-TENG was constructed with an appropriate multiple-structure, low cost, and high efficiency. It provided a high voltage and stable current output for the electro-PMA/ H_2O_2 system with a rectified voltage and rectified current of approximately 22 V and 10 μA , respectively. Cooperating with the WD-TENG, $\cdot\text{OH}$ played a key role in 4-CP removal, and the spin number was improved from 4.2×10^{15} to 5.0×10^{15} , resulting in a 10% improvement in the removal of 4-CP. 4-CP is removed predominantly by dichlorination and mineralization by free radicals. The mechanism of the self-powered electro-PMA/ H_2O_2 system and possible pathways of 4-CP degradation were systematically explained based on the experiments. This study provides a promising methodology for improving the performance of self-powered electrochemical processes for treating environmental pollution.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Xinliang Liu and Shuangxi Nie conceived the idea and designed the experiment. Jilong Mo and Wanhai Wu carried out the materials characterization and fabricated the devices. Wanhai Wu and Hainong Song performed the electrical measurement. Jilong Mo, Xinliang Liu and Shuangxi Nie wrote the manuscript. All the authors discussed the results and commented on the manuscript.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence

the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at [doi:10.1016/j.apcatb.2022.121422](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apcatb.2022.121422).

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